



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
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NEWS RELEASE

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Three Foundations Support RIDE Race to the Top Grant Application

Three major philanthropic organizations – one local, one regional, and one national – have volunteered to provide the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) with a total of \$245,000 in support to ensure that Rhode Island has an excellent chance to receive federal Race to the Top education funds, Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist announced today (October 19th, 2009).

To assist RIDE in submitting a first-caliber Race to the Top application, the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation will provide RIDE with \$95,000 in support, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation will provide \$75,000, and the Rhode Island Foundation will provide \$75,000.

“We are so grateful for this generous support from three of our finest philanthropic organizations devoted to improving public education,” said Commissioner Gist. “This support is a great vote of confidence in our pledge to transform Rhode Island schools. With this help, we can be sure that our application for federal Race to the Top funds will be among the strongest from any state. If successful, our application could bring to Rhode Island upwards of \$100 million to help us close achievement gaps and advance learning for all.”

“Rhode Island students stand a strong chance at benefiting from significant federal support that could enable the state’s public-education system to be among the top in the nation,” said Dan Katzir, managing director of The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation. “We are proud to help underwrite costs that will drive Commissioner Gist’s smart strategy forward and make sure that Rhode Island is competitively positioned to receive this once-in-a-lifetime federal support.”

“We’re thrilled to be working with our partners to support the Commissioner in this effort,” said Nellie Mae Education Foundation President and CEO Nicholas C. Donohue. “This is a tremendous opportunity to help secure funding that could help move important reform efforts forward and help ensure that more Rhode Island learners acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to be civically engaged, economically self-sufficient, lifelong learners.”

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“We are committed to working with Commissioner Gist, and we applaud her vision of a Rhode Island where all students are ready for success in college, careers, and life,” said Neil D. Steinberg, president and CEO of The Rhode Island Foundation. “The Race to the Top clearly represents an incredible opportunity for the state to make that vision a reality. It’s great to be in the company of two other distinguished funders — the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and The Broad Foundation — in support of this important effort.”

RIDE will use the funds from the three foundations to hire national experts to work with RIDE staff in preparing the strategy for Rhode Island education reform. The grant application requires the state to specify in detail how Rhode Island would use the money to support school reform, specifically to improve teacher effectiveness, turn around the lowest-performing schools, build better data systems, and establish world-class standards and assessments.

RIDE has contracted with two firms to help with the grant application process: ConnectEd Partners and Urban Policy Development Consulting. The Brown University Education Department has also provided graduate assistants to help with the process.

In addition, Commissioner Gist has assembled a steering committee of education, community, and business leaders to guide the grant-application process. Members of the steering committee are: Daniel Beardsley, Jr. (R.I. League of Cities & Towns), Heiry Borrell (Young Voices), Norma Cole (R.I. Association of School Principals), Sen. Daniel P. Connors, Beth Cotter (House Majority Leader’s office), Michael Crowley (R.I. Association of School Committees), Bernie DiLullo (R.I. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development), Janet Durfee-Hidalgo (Office of the Governor), Daniel P. Egan (R.I. Association of Independent Colleges and Universities), Karen Feldman (Young Voices), House Majority Leader Gordon D. Fox, Stephen Furtado (Rhode Island PTA), Colleen Jermain (R.I. School Superintendents Association), Ramon Martinez (formerly of Progreso Latino), Steven J. Maurano (Office of Higher Education), Julie Nora (R.I. League of Charter Schools), James Parisi (R.I. American Federation of Teachers), Amanda Pereira (Young Voices), Lawrence E. Purtill (NEA Rhode Island), Janet Raymond (Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce), Betsy P. Shimberg (Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education), Warren Simmons (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Brown University), and Michael Van Leesten (Unity Coalition of Rhode Island).

The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation (www.broadfoundation.org) is a national venture philanthropy established by entrepreneur Eli Broad to advance entrepreneurship for the public good in education, science, and the arts. The Broad Foundation’s education work is focused on dramatically improving urban K-12 public education through better governance, management, labor relations, and competition.

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation is the largest philanthropy in New England that focuses exclusively on education. The Foundation provides grants and other support to education programs and intermediary organizations in order to stimulate transformative change in public education systems and ensure that all New England’s learners are prepared for success. The Foundation investigates, promotes, and supports a greater variety of high-quality educational opportunities that enable all citizens—*especially and essentially those from underserved populations*—to obtain the skills, knowledge and supports necessary to become civically engaged, economically self-sufficient life-long learners. Since it was established in 1998, the Foundation has distributed nearly \$98 million in grants. For more information, visit www.nmefdn.org

The Rhode Island Foundation, one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the United States, established in 1916, works to build a better Rhode Island as a philanthropic resource for people, communities, organizations, and programs. <http://www.rifoundation.org/>